

## Notes from Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review ID NEPA Team Meeting, May 13, 1999, 1:00 PM, Corps of Engineers Building

In attendance:

William DeRagon, Corps	Lori Robertson, Bureau of Reclamation
Ellen Dietrich, SAIC	Gary Rutherford, Corps
Richard Fike, Corps	Bill Spurgeon, Corps
Shawn Boelman, Bureau of Reclamation	Gail Stockton, Corps
Chris Gorbach, Bureau of Reclamation	Pat Turney, NMISC
Mark Harberg, Corps	John Whipple, NMISC
Ron Kneebone, Corps	Jeff Whitney, FWS
Clay Mathers, Corps	Jim Wilber, Bureau of Reclamation
Robert Padilla, Bureau of Reclamation	Doug Wolf, Corps
Cynthia Piirto, Corps	

- ❖ Gail Stockton distributed a draft of a letter to be mailed to the Pueblos, tribes, and other potential cooperating agencies to invite them to participate in the Water Operations Review. She asked that the ID Team members review and comment on this letter by fax soon.
  - Also included with the letter will be enclosures providing background information on NEPA and the responsibilities of cooperating agencies.
  - The group briefly discussed who might be interested in participation as a cooperating agency. All Pueblos and tribes in the basin will be invited. No potential cooperating agencies have been formally invited yet. Some have technical expertise and may wish to participate in technical team activities.
  - In addition, the group suggested sending letters to the IBWC–US Section, FWS, and BIA.
- ❖ The temporary NMISC representative to the Water Operations Review is Pat Turney, replacing Marsha Mose.
- ❖ Discussion of status of action items from the April 8 workshop.
  - Page 6, second arrow on meeting notes: Review of river reaches by technical teams.
    - Robert Padilla reviewed the reaches listed by the Geomorphology technical team, which correspond to the gages. A copy of the list was distributed.
      - Gail suggested that the main reaches should correspond to the reaches used in URGWOM, to take advantage of model outputs. Technical teams can divide reaches further for their own purposes.
      - The Geomorphology technical team reaches coincide with the Bosque Initiative reaches in the Middle Valley, but are grouped more than URGWOM's reaches upstream and downstream.
    - It was suggested that Reach 15, El Paso to Fort Quitman, be broken up at American Dam because the IBWC information correlates to those segments.



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IBWC will be more involved in the Water Operations Review and provide data for the river below Caballo. They may be a cooperating agency.



- Jeff suggested that Reach 5 be broken up into two reaches, Heron to El Vado and El Vado to Abiquiu, to account for different hydrology and land use.



- A discussion of the difference between evaluating impacts to reservoirs and impacts to rivers followed in response to a suggestion to change Reach 8 to end at Cochiti Dam instead of Cochiti Reservoir. This change was accepted as long as the technical teams recognize that the flows, ecology, and recreational activities in the deltas must be evaluated differently than those in the river channel. The deltas should be evaluated as transition zones in the reservoirs.



- Jeff suggested that the reach from Jemez Canyon Dam to the confluence with the Rio Grande might need to be separated out of Reach 9, Cochiti Dam to Bernalillo, to look at management of the sediment pool. For now, it is probably not necessary to include the area upstream from Jemez Canyon reservoir because the Corps does not have operating authority there.
- The Geomorphology technical team met recently, discussed the existing data for each reach, and developed a matrix of data needs. They would like to know if other teams have discussed their data needs, especially those that must be provided by the Geomorphology technical team. They recognize that other teams will require data from them, and would like to get started in developing the information. They need to get a list of the river data requirements from other technical teams, including types and locations.
  - Robert asked if anyone is compiling a list of available data for all technical teams to access.
  - Chris Gorbach responded that no one is compiling data needs yet, but it would be something to think about doing. Bill Miller's bibliography of hydrologic investigations for URGWOM is available in the technical team notebook.
  - Doug Wolf suggested that it would be possible to provide a link on the URGWOM Web site to a compiled list of data and references for all technical teams to use.
  - Mark Harberg suggested that Clay Mathers, new Corps GIS specialist, compile the information and get it ready to link to the Web site. Clay suggested that the list include only relevant data and references, not just a listing of all available data.
- Technical teams should provide a list of needed data to the Project Managers as soon as possible. Technical teams should consider that the same kind and quality of data might not be needed for each reach in the basin. Type of data would also vary by the resource studied.
- The information on data needs should be included in each technical team study plan.
- At the next Water Operations Review ID Team meeting, the Geomorphology technical team will select a single reach and scenario and make a presentation on the types of data that other teams can obtain from the Geomorphology technical team analysis.



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- ◆ After some discussion, the group agreed that Reach 9 on the list, below Cochiti Dam, would be the best for the presentation because good data is available. The team will use the kind of data (inflow or outflow hydrographs) that would be obtained from URGWOM.
- ◆ Technical teams can learn what types of data would be available from URGWOM and from the Geomorphology technical team through this presentation.
- Further discussion on technical team data needs is summarized below.
  - Ron Kneebone, Cultural Resources technical team, thought that his team would need river data on items like geomorphology, channel migration and sinuosity for each reach, and how they would be affected under different alternative operations.
  - Jeff Whitney pointed out that the BLM is planning to study the effects of instream flow on habitat and hydrology in the Taos box, using instream flow incremental methodology. These data would be useful to the technical teams, when it becomes available.
  - William DeRagon asked for clarification on URGWOM output and whether it is stated as mean daily discharge. The response was that, yes, it can be mean daily discharge or reservoir volume or reservoir level. The baseline hydrology uses adjusted USGS gage data.
- Page 6, last arrow: Will require some follow-up by the NMISC representative to add Upper Rio Grande Basin projects to the list in the technical team notebook.
- Page 7, first bullet: Discussion of the definition of the baseline for the Water Operations Review.
  - There is still some question on the definition of the baseline, and whether it is a hydrologic baseline or a description of the current physical system.
  - One line of thought is that the baseline is describing the current (post-Cochiti) physical system, through which other flow periods of record, including wet and dry periods, can be run.
  - Another is that the baseline should be current hydrology, without including San Juan-Chama water in the baseline.
  - Jeff suggested that the group use the information in the Biological Assessment as a starting point for thinking about defining baseline conditions and for characterizing current operations. Gail will provide the rest of the BA to technical teams if needed.
  - Mark asked what projects since 1975 should be included in the baseline, such as changes in the operation of the closed basin. He also suggested that the term baseline should be replaced with “period of record.”
  - There was discussion on whether the baseline should reflect the City of Albuquerque’s use of San Juan-Chama water, and that preliminary Water Operations Review decisions should not preempt the full NEPA process.
  - Chris reminded the group that this EIS is analytical, not exhaustive, and must be written for the public. It should not use a baseline that is too complicated. The goal of defining a baseline is to use current operating conditions for comparison of alternatives.

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- Chris also pointed out that the baseline is different from the no action alternative. Lori Robertson clarified that the no action alternative is what would happen if no changes to water operations were made because of this EIS. All alternatives must use the same conditions (baseline) for comparison of impacts.
- Doug suggested that hydrology from other periods of record can be run through the physical system used in the model. He would like some direction on whether to use historic records or stochastic data for this purpose. It was agreed that historic data would be best where good data are available.
- This discussion will be continued at future ID Team meetings.



- ❖ The next meeting of the Upper Rio Grande Basin Water Operations Review ID NEPA Team will be held on July 8.